# AEON'S END
## BEYOND THE BREACH

## NARRATIVE BOOKLET

## INTRO TO BATTLE 1

*I am needed here, whatever I may be, wherever this may be. My task remains unfulfilled. I must persist.*

Nook wakes up, as he always does, on the small cot in the back of his laboratory. Indira's been begging him to settle in properly now that they're in Northpost, to make himself a real home. *Even Mazra doesn't live in the library anymore, Nook.* There is a balance to having a life. But truthfully, Nook has never felt more balanced. Perhaps even moreso than when he was younger, before the accident, the shattering of time that left his mind like sharp-edged shards of glass—reflecting a dozen different angles of light, and poised to cut his careless fingers.

Nook doesn't remember what it was to be un-fractured, yet when he closes his eyes he lives his childhood in perfect reality. Then is now, and now is then. Every second of every day, Gravehold is crumbling, Nook is choking on the dust in his throat, eyes watering as he claws fruitlessly through the piled rubble. His palms are shredded and bloody, his throat too dry to scream for his mother any longer. Every second of every day, his mother does not hear him crying.

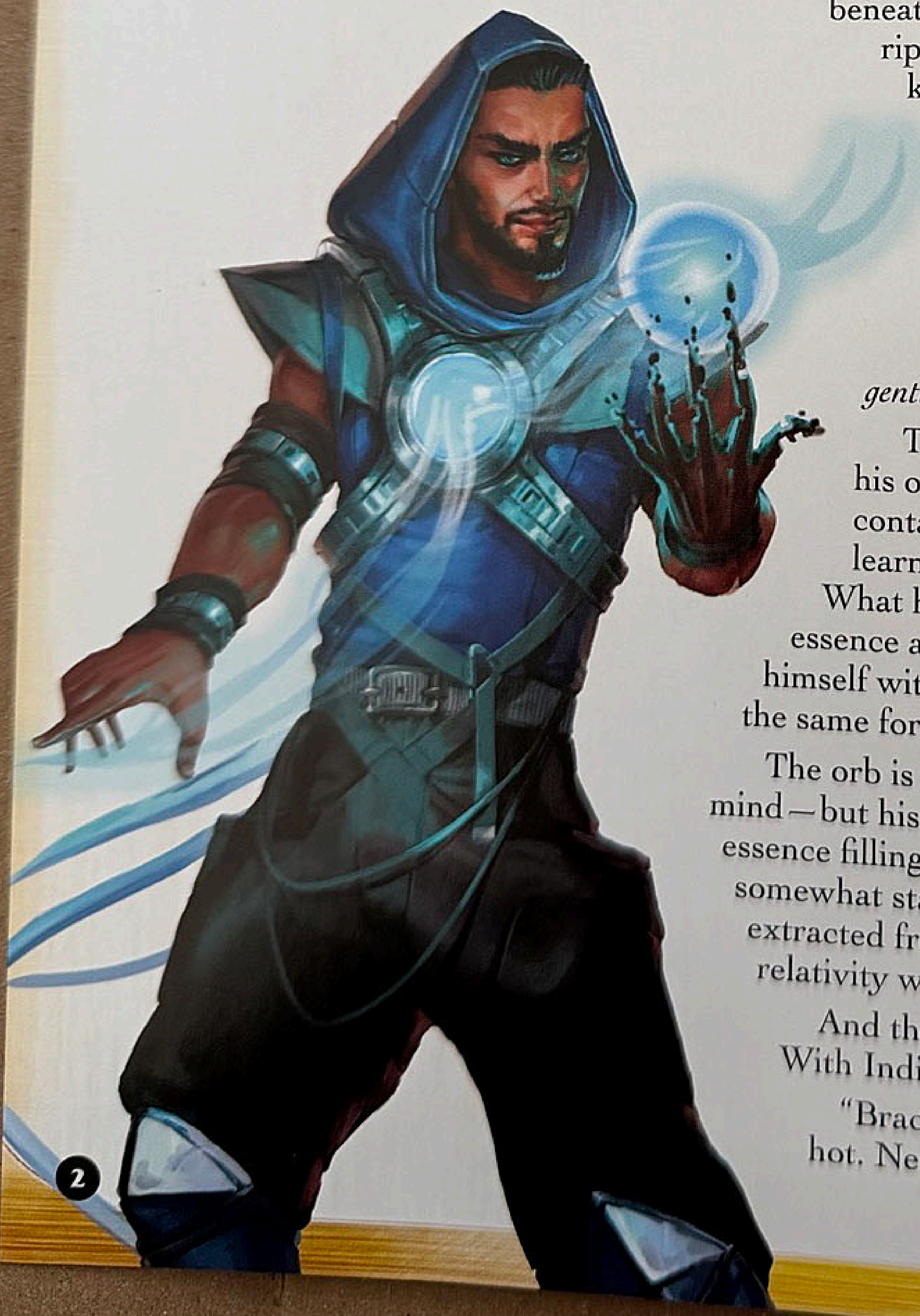
*"She's gone, she's gone, come on, you have to move," Indira begs as she pulls Nook into her arms. Barely more than a child herself. "I've got you, I've got you, we have to get out of here. I'm so sorry, we have to get out of here."*

"It's okay, Indira. You did everything you could."

"Huh?" Indira is looking at him oddly from where she sits, cross-legged on the surface of his workbench. He's told her a thousand times not to sit there, it could contaminate his experiments. Or has he told her at all?

"Where are you right now?" Indira asks, rolling her eyes, and Nook is burying his face in the side of her neck. He is kissing the tips of her fingers. He is bleeding from a gash above his eye, and the blood is soaking into her torn shirt where he's held against her chest.

"The end." Nook lifts his orb, glowing brilliant and blue, to his eyeline, and twists it experimentally. "And the beginning."



"That's a lot of places for one man to be," Indira replies as she hops down from the table. She rests a hand on top of the orb and it pulses beneath her touch, the Void storm trapped within it struggling to rip free. "Do you feel ready? We don't have to do this today, you know."

Nook shakes his head. "Today, yesterday, it's all the same. I think I've been ready since the day I died."

Indira snorts, her lips twitching into a smile that fades as soon as it appears. "Well I can confirm you didn't die yesterday, you weirdo. And it won't be today either."

*"Hush now, hush," Indira whispers into his hair as she rocks him gently. "It's all going to be okay."*

The experiment, at its core, is simple. When Nook first created his orb, he had been trying to seal a portion of the Void inside a container. A microcosm upon which further tests could be run, to learn about how the Void itself would respond to different stimuli. What he hadn't anticipated was that trying to absorb so much Void essence at once would be impossible to control, and take almost all of himself with it. It was almost as though his own magic was attracted to the same forces that pull in Void essence.

The orb is how he held himself together—first his magic, then his mind—but his essence was still scattered. Stuck inside the timeless Void essence filling his orb. Its proximity was the only thing keeping him even somewhat stable. Nook's hypothesis was this: if his aether alone could be extracted from the orb and returned to him, it may return his sense of relativity with it.

And then, perhaps, he could live in the present again. This present. With Indira.

"Brace yourself," Indira warns as her hands begin to glow golden-hot. Nearly scalding his fingertips where they meet along the edges of the mystic orb. Nook can watch the magic beginning to flow inside her eyes, as brilliant blue as the fire within his orb. They both step forward, pinning the burning orb between their chests. Nook bites his tongue against the pain and tries to be empty—a black hole, waiting to be filled.

The orb gets hotter, brighter. Indira tries to say something, but Nook can't hear it over the tearing wind knocking his research notes from their shelves. The blue light is blinding now, and the last thing Nook sees is Indira squeezing her glowing eyes shut before he shuts his own.

*Dezmodia turns her dark eyed gaze back to Nook. "You aren't where you're meant to be."*

*"I think that's what I'm trying to create," Nook answers, securing the broken stone face onto his belt. It's heavy, but oddly warm where it rests against his thigh. A familiar weight, as if it had always been there. "A place where I'm meant to be."*

"Who the hell are you? What are you doing here?"

When Nook opens his eyes, he sees Indira, staring at him in shock across the orb still pinned between them, and then he is pulled from his stupor by a muscular, calloused hand grabbing his arm and tugging him sharply to the side. He barely manages to hold onto the orb as he stumbles out of the way of a set of clashing jaws.

He's not in his laboratory anymore, or anywhere he recognizes from his past. He's in a room with walls and floor of solid metal, reflecting odd, bright light too sharp to be fire and too artificial to be aether orbs. The glowing glass lights struggle to hold back the strangely thick darkness seeping through the seamlines in the metal walls like an ichor. The air is heavy and humid with steam, and the face of the stranger yelling at him is streaked with sweat.

"This is no place for civilians," the woman growls, her voice as thick as the scars along her arms. "Tell me you can fight."

"We can fight," Nook babbles out. "But we don't know—"

"Chitchat later!" Nook looks over his shoulder to see two more strangers, a man in flowing, beautiful robes, and a teenage boy with his back pressed to the wall behind him. In front of them, a Nameless swims through the metal walls as if they were nothing but water. "Survive now!"

**Battle One**

**Fight The Terror in Brass.**

**Set up Dai, the Youth as your Friend and The Creeping Dark as your Foe according to the Friends and Foes rulebook.**

**At the end of your game versus The Terror in Brass, if you won, read the next section.**

**If you lost, fight it again. After your second game, read the next section.**

**The Friends and Foes module is an optional add-on for players who want a more complicated experience. If you would like a simpler game, feel free to play this expedition without setting up the Friend and Foe.**

## BATTLE 1 CONCLUSION

*"You don't understand," Nook shakes his head. "I'm not supposed to be here. I'm…I'm not sure if I'm supposed to be anywhere, honestly."*

*"There's no supposed to be, Nook." Lash wipes gently at Nook's cheeks, catching the hot tears. "There's just living."*

"Are you alright?"

Nook's consciousness comes back to the metal room, the still-warm body of the Nameless sprawled out before them, the strange man standing in front of him with a concerned expression on his face. Nook's not sure how long he's been standing here, caught in a memory, or a vision or… It's hard to figure out what's real sometimes.

"He's alright." Indira rests a hand on his shoulder. "He gets a bit lost in his head sometimes, but he's alright. I'm Indira, and this is Nook. Who are you? And where are we?"

"I'm Stake. This is Dai and Wolf, my strike squad. You're in the System." Stake shoots Indira an odd look, as if he can't believe he has to say anything at all. "The tunnels beneath Cindercrown."

Nook looks at Indira, used to feeling left behind in conversation, but she seems as confused as he is. "What's Cindercrown?"

Dai scoffs. "What kind of idiot do you have to be to not know about Cindercrown? It's only the biggest bastion city in the world and the place you're literally in right now."

"Where'd you come from?" Stake asks, suddenly a bit more cautious. "The System should be hermetically sealed off from the outside."

*"But we're sealed off from the outside world, isn't that the whole point?" Indira asks, desperately. "Where are we supposed to go?"*

*"Don't worry, child. There's paths to the surface even Brama never knew of." Yan Magda rests a hand on Indira's shoulder. "We will survive. That is what it means to be the people of*

"Gravehold."

Indira is staring at Nook. Stake and Wolf are staring at Nook. Dai looks faint.

"We're from Gravehold," Nook repeats.

"Well now I know you're messing with us," Dai says, obviously trying to look confident even though his face is pale as bone. "Gravehold hasn't existed for thousands of years."

"Stake." Wolf elbows her companion with a grave expression. "Look what he's holding in his hands."

Nook lifts his orb to his eyeline. It looks different than it had before, the Void inside it swirling backwards in impossible channels. Like a waterfall flowing upwards. The blue glow is more intense, snapping and sparking within its shell. As he watches, the glow is beginning to build, slowly, the orb getting warmer in his hand.

"It can't be." Stake's eyes reflect the brilliant blue glow with greedy wonder. "All our hypothesizing, all our theories, and you'd already cracked it thousands of years in the past."

"Cracked what?" Indira asks, confused and exasperated.

Stake grins, teeth tinting blue in the orb's eerie light. "Time travel."

**Open deck 1d and add all of the cards in that deck to your Barracks.**
**Read the next section when you are ready to start the next battle.**

## INTRO TO BATTLE 2

"Now you know the Void has odd properties when it comes to the passage of time," Stake is pacing around the room as he explains, gesturing with Nook's orb in one hand. How long has he been holding that? "Or, well, did you know that? I don't know how far Void research had advanced in your period. I believe it was something of a dark age for research in the post-Fall era, due to the superstitions of the time."

"We know about the Void," Indira says, her arms folded in tight annoyance. "You go in for a day, come out old, or go in for ten years and come back exactly the same. Sometimes corrupted, sometimes not."

"Right, exactly. Well, not exactly but close enough." Stake waves away the concern, clearly too excited to explain it properly. Indira's eye twitches. "That's why our scientists have considered for years that proper utilization of the Void could allow for intentional time distortion. We call it Void warping."

"But it's never been done before?" Nook asks.

"Never this successfully." Wolf takes the orb from her companion, inspecting it with equal fascination. "There's been a few warps that took their mage back a second or two. But generally once they put their orb down they snap back instantly. A jump this big? And this stable? Unheard of."

"Very interesting and all, but we didn't mean to come here, and we didn't plan to time travel." Indira reaches out to snatch the orb back from Wolf. "We need to figure out how to get home. We have a life there."

"Do we?"

Indira looks over at Nook in shock. "Of course we do, Nook. Our home, our friends."

*It is nice to work in the ruins of Old Gravehold with Gygar. Indira thinks it was good for me. Stone has always been stable, in the past, the present, the future. It was and will be buildings again, but now and always it is stone. Some things did not, do not, will never change. It is helpful, to think of the rocks.*

"We had a real home once. With everyone, together. It wasn't perfect, but it was ours, and it was taken from us." Nook balls his hands into fists. "I don't have a new life, Indi, I'm still living that one. Every day I live in the death and the horror, and I can't take it anymore."

"That's why we're fixing you." Indira rests a gentle hand on Nook's arm. "We're getting closer, we're figuring it out. I promised I'd save you, didn't I?"

*"Hush now, hush," Indira whispers into his hair as she rocks him gently. "It's all going to be okay."*

"It will be." Nook takes his orb back and holds it up, reverently before him. This is the key to it all. "Because I'm going to stop it."

"Stop what?" Dai asks, stepping forward into the conversation.

"The Fall. The destruction of Gravehold. The Nameless that destroyed our lives. All of it."

"Nook, you can't just—"

The swirling Void storm inside the orb begins to flicker again, flashes of purple, blue, blinding white. The glass heats up in Nook's hand, burning his skin, but he holds fast, clutching the precious tool in a tight grip.

Nook catches Indira's gaze, desperately. "Come with me. I know I can do this."

Indira looks stricken, frozen with a thousand arguments she wants to say poised in her throat. Nook can almost hear them, as if he's living all the many lives where she said them, where she convinced him, where they turned back to their little life in Northpost and tried everything to patch him back together until they gave up. He sees the branching pathways side by side, like double vision, parallax, both equally now and not now.

And then she puts her hand on the orb.

"You're not leaving without us!" Stake grins as he, Wolf, and Dai rush to join the huddle. "Miss an opportunity to see the original Gravehold? Maybe even change the world?"

"Not just change the world." Nook squeezes his eyes shut and thinks of home. "We're going to save it."

With a brilliantly blue flash, the air around them warps. From thick and muggy to cold and misty, vapor congealing on their faces. Nook opens his eyes to look around and sees a strangely empty world. The ground beneath them is stone, coated in a thin layer of gravel. The sky is pallid, faded, as if a great beast had sucked the color from the world, and left the air thin and difficult to breathe.

"Is this Gravehold?" Dai asks, wrapping his arms around himself against the cold. "It's even worse than I expected."

"No." Indira looks around, holding her glowing opal in front of her cautiously to survey the landscape around them. "Not Gravehold. I think we're in the Void."

"We must not have completed the warp," Stake muses, scratching at his chin. "Can we go again? Get closer?"

When Nook looks at his orb, it flickers dimly in his hand. The bright blue glow is faded now, sinking into the twisting black Void current. "I think this only has so many charges. Judging by the light, it seems we've used up about half. We might only have two jumps left."

"What happens when it runs out? Are we stuck here?" Indira is chewing on her lip. He'd told her it's a bad habit, but some things never change.

Something shines in the nearby distance, catching the cold blue light of the orb. It casts odd shadows, pooling in empty eye sockets and the dip of chins. As the group watches in horror, the strange, bulbous creature oozes towards them like ivory magma, stone flowing over stone. As it gets closer, they can see faces in the dim light, all contorted and frozen in living marble.

"The Prophet," Indira says, in pale-faced certainty. "I fought this thing before, with Yan. It was the last Nameless to attack before…before."

"Then we're in the right place." Nook turns to face it, true determination sparking like a fire in his chest. "We can't stop now."

*"I've gotcha, it's gonna be alright." Lash says, stepping forward and hoisting his spear. "We're gonna stop this together."*

"Guys?" Dai sounds panicked, his back to the rest of the group as he watches the shadows. "I don't think it's alone here. Something might've come through the warp with us."

The fire in Nook's orb flickers, ominously, long fingers of shadow stretching across the stone faces of the Prophet.

"Keep your eyes peeled. I'm sure whatever it is isn't picky about its victims," Wolf says, as she hoists her hammer and charges in.

**Battle Two**

**Open envelope 2.**

**Set up Lash, the Dreamer as your Friend and The Creeping Dark as your Foe, according to the Friends and Foes rulebook.**

**Open deck 2a. Use the cards in this deck to set up the nemesis deck according to page 10 of the rulebook. There are seven upgraded basic cards in this deck that you will use when setting up every nemesis for the rest of the expedition.**

**Fight Twice-Dead Prophet.**

**At the end of your game versus Twice-Dead Prophet, if you won, read the next section.**

**If you lost, fight it again. After your second game, read the next section.**

## BATTLE 2 CONCLUSION

Nook stares down at the shattered stones at his feet. Faces of gods cracked and scattered across the cavern floor. He stoops, taking one of the cold, marble faces in his hands.

*"That mask," Indira gasps.*

It's his.

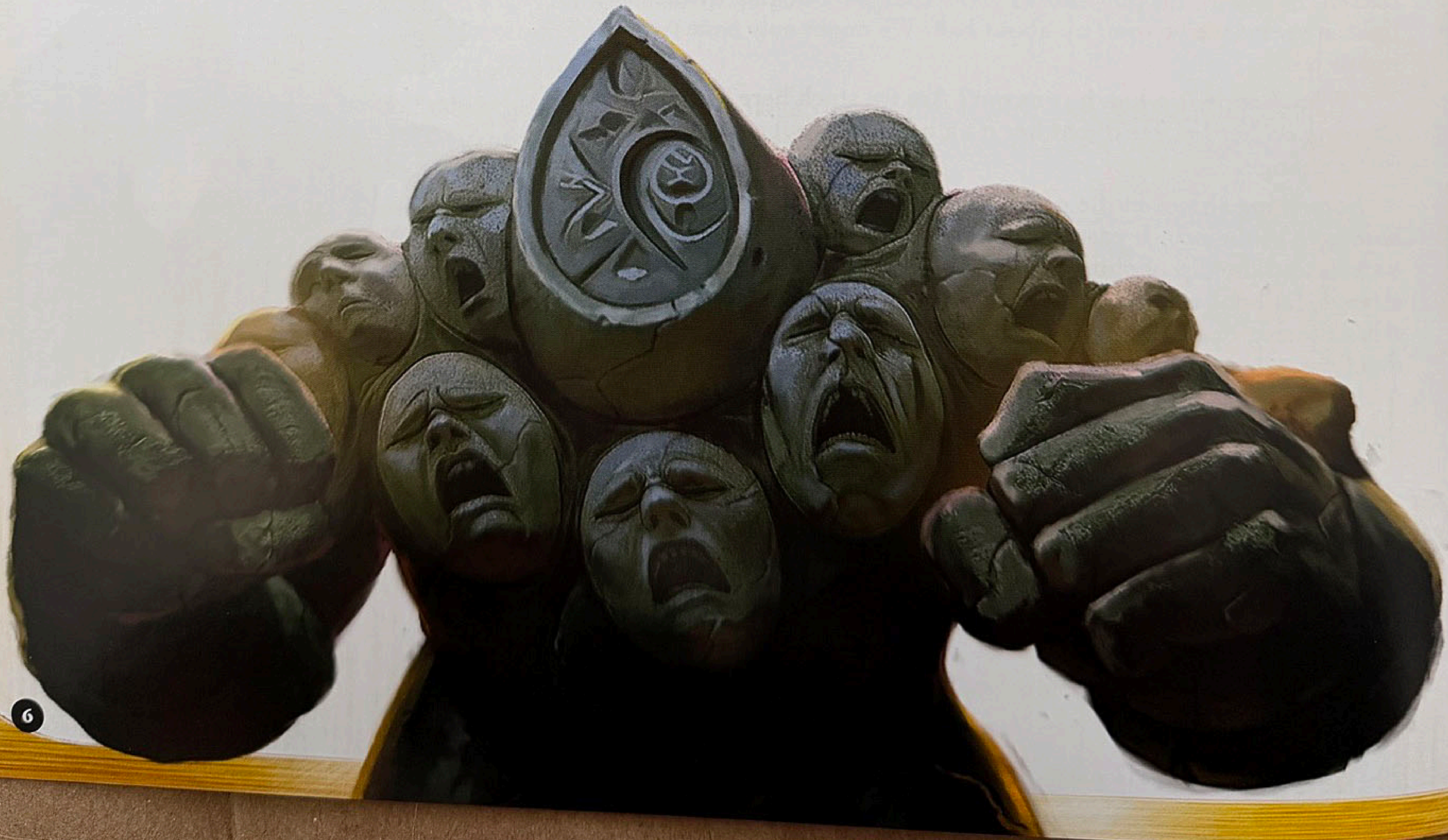
"We'd better figure out how to get out of here," Indira says, stepping forward. "We're not going to be able to get to Gravehold when we're stuck in the Void."

"I could assist you with that."

The group turns around to see Dezmodia, her face round and childish, but her eyes deadly serious. Ambling behind her with a pleasant smile is Lash, with a face Nook has not seen in decades, but also saw only moments ago.

"Dez?" Indira blinks, shaking her head in shock. "What are you doing here?"

"The place in between is as familiar to me as my own reflection in glass." Dezmodia folds her hands before her, gravely. "I often return to visit my infant cradle."



"And I'm here because Dezzy needs a babysitter," Lash adds, leaning in over her head.

Dezmodia frowns. "Brama only insists on watching me because she fears the Void, and all that walk within it."

*Brama stares at Dezmodia, a momentary hesitance in her eyes at the sight of the young prodigy standing like a ghost returned from the grave. "You are a minority, who made your choices. I protect all the people."*

*"You protect no one," Z'bana counters. "And if you keep exiling everyone who doesn't agree with you, soon you'll have no one left."*

"And also cuz you're like, ten," Lash mumbles under his breath.

"The greater question is why are all of you here?" Dezmodia turns her dark eyed gaze back to Nook. "You aren't where you're meant to be."

"I think that's what I'm trying to create," Nook answers, securing the broken stone face onto his belt. It's heavy, but oddly warm where it rests against his thigh. A familiar weight, as if it had always been there. "A place where I'm meant to be."

"Something bad happens here. Soon." Indira steps forward, resting a hand on Nook's arm. "We've come to try and prevent it."

"What, from the future?" Lash says with a chuckle that dies in his throat as he sees the grim faces all around him. "Are you serious? You're from the future? How far? Did I grow up handsome?"

Dezmodia closes her eyes and dips her head solemnly. "This calamity. That is how I die, is it not? I've known my whole life what death would feel like. Heat and light and fire."

*Dezmodia continues to rise in the air, radiating so brightly it's difficult to look at her. "You did well buying us time. Now, I can end this. Take care of Gravehold." The cavern walls are rocked to their core as Dezmodia releases all of her stored energy at Maelstrom.*

*As Dezmodia erupts into violent light, the world begins to fall apart*

"It's…complicated," says Indira.

"We can save you," says Nook. "We know what happens, now. We just have to warn the right people and we can circumvent it."

Dezmodia doesn't look fully convinced, but after a moment she nods her head. "You won't all be able to stay in this time period forever, so what's important is leaving your mark. Each time we are attacked by the Prince of Gluttons it consumes our collective memory and leaves us vulnerable. The first step to saving Gravehold must be keeping that creature away from us so that we can hold on to the knowledge you bring to us."

As if on cue, the orb begins to pulse and glow between Nook's hands. He holds it up and everyone rushes to grab on to him as the rising wind threatens to tear them apart.

Nook squeezes his eyes shut and shouts: "Take me to the Prince of Gluttons!"

**Open deck 2b and add all of the cards in that deck to your Barracks.**
**Read the next section when you are ready to start the next battle.**

## INTRO TO BATTLE 3

Nook opens his eyes again to an almost familiar laboratory, though far more advanced than his own. The walls are made of dark, well-oiled wood and the floors are polished marble. Rows of tables hold pristine equipment—beakers, crystals, diodes, advanced machinery Nook can't even begin to guess at the purpose of. The group spreads out, investigating their strange surroundings.

"Listen," Lash whispers, following along behind Nook as he roams between the pristine lab tables. "I don't want to be contrary, but isn't this a paradox? Like, if you change the past, wouldn't this version of you not exist anymore?"

"I don't know how to explain it." Nook stops and lifts a hand to his throbbing head. "I didn't come back to the past, not really. This time…it's happening now. And my time is also now. Stake and Wolf's future, that's now too. It's all happening simultaneously. All equally real, all equally both true and in flux. Like a mirror held up to another to create endless reflections—the actions we take here ripple, but everything still exists."

"Are you sure, Nook?"

Nook blinks at Lash in surprise. "I hadn't introduced myself."

"You don't have to," Lash chuckles and rests his hand on Nook's shoulder. "You look just like Tressa."

Nook's hands are trembling, the words he wants to say caught in his throat. "You…know her?"

"I know you too." Lash reaches out to cup Nook's face in his hands. "Although I'm used to seeing you much smaller, with big, chubby cheeks."

Lash's smile is unbearably fond, and Nook feels like he's made of runny wax, melting apart at his touch.

"I'm glad you came home," Lash whispers. "Back to us, where you belong. With your family."

"You don't understand," Nook shakes his head. "I'm not supposed to be here. I'm…I'm not sure if I'm supposed to be anywhere, honestly."

"There's no supposed to be, Nook." Lash wipes gently at Nook's cheeks, catching the hot tears. "There's just living."

"Excuse me?" Nook is startled out of his reverie, wheeling around to see a man standing in the doorway to the laboratory. He's tall and thin, long hair pulled back into a neat braid. He wears a pristine white labcoat and a pair of goggles on his head. "I don't know how you all got in here, but you need to be wearing protective gear. You'll sully the conditions of the experiment with outside particulates."

"We're looking for the Prince of Gluttons," Indira says, and then at the man's blank expression, clarifies. "It's a Nameless with a bunch of tentacles and eyes?"

"Oh! You must be referring to the Hunger. One of my most recent successes. I'll take you." The man turns around with a swirl of fabric and begins to head back down the hall he came from. Nook and the rest of the group hurry to follow him.

"I'm, of course, Dr. Soleil D'Arca, the head of the Royal Erythiza Academy's corruption studies department, and we have been doing very exciting research here, my friends, very exciting indeed." The doctor prattles on consistently as they walk, leaving no space for questions or followup. "Though I'm sure you're already aware since you know about the Hunger which is, of course, our latest acquisition. The goal of it all, as you must certainly know, is to rid the world of the scourge that is corruption, and in this eternal pursuit this creature we are calling the Hunger is most valuable for its notable capacity to consume life at the molecular level."

Dr. Soleil leads them through a set of double doors into a much larger room, entirely tiled white from floor to the arching ceiling above them. A huge glass canister sits in the center of it, with a creature all tentacles and eyes pressed up against the inside of it. As the group enters, it seems to grow agitated, throwing itself at the thick walls of its cage. Indira shudders and grabs the back of Nook's shirt in a fierce grip.

"Erythiza," Stake sucks in an excited breath. "I cannot believe I'm standing in this room. Please, Dr. D'Arca, you must tell me. What is your purpose with this creature?"

"As I mentioned, the creature has a capacity to consume both aether and corruption. It draws in the corruption, and we would then move that concentrated corruption into a stable container. We're still experimenting with containers, but once we have one we can begin to filter out corruption from our atmosphere." Dr. Soleil looks starry-eyed, taken with his own vision. "Can you imagine how wonderful that would be?"

The Hunger makes a sort of screeching noise, slamming its tentacle against the glass.

"You're trying to take the Void and seal it inside a container?" Nook feels vaguely sick with deja vu. He lifts his orb and both the Hunger and Dr. Soleil eye it with sudden interest.

"Well now…" Dr. Soleil goes to take a step forward, but before he can there's a great crash as with a sudden vigor the Hunger slams a tendril straight through the thick glass of its container. Everyone grabs for their weapons, but the creature doesn't attack. Instead it begins to inhale, bulbous eye still fixated on the orb, and the room begins to shudder and shake as Void essence rushes in like the curtain of night.

"Where is it?" Wolf growls. "I can't see!"

"It's going to eat all our memories," Dai shouts. "We have to stop it before we forget where we came from!"

"Everyone get out of here!" Dr. Soleil screams through the sudden storm. "There's nothing to contain the corruption, it's going to—"

With a sickening slurping sound, the swirling corruption begins to drain from the room. But not into the Hunger.

Dai is in the center of the room, grappling with the creature, his hand clasped over its mouth and its tentacles wrapped around his arms. And all the corruption in the room is slowly sinking into his skin, spreading like black bruises beneath the surface, splitting his flesh open as dozens of eyes sprout across his arms and back and legs. He and the Hunger are fusing, congealing into an irregularly shaped mass of black tendrils and staring eyes.

"Dai, no!" Stake cries, taking a single step forward before Lash catches him by the arm and holds him back.

"I've gotcha, it's gonna be alright," Lash says, stepping forward and hoisting his spear. "We're gonna stop this together."

"The best we can do for him now is stop him." Wolf rests her hand on Dai's other arm, her voice crooked with rage and grief. "Before he becomes something even farther from human."

**Battle 3**

**Open envelope 3. Add Dezmodia to your Barracks.**

**Set up Lash, the Dreamer as your Friend and The Hunger as your Foe, according to the Friends and Foes rulebook.**

**Open deck 3a. Use the cards in this deck to set up the nemesis deck. There are four upgraded basic cards in this deck that you will use when setting up every nemesis for the rest of the expedition.**

**Fight The Oracle of Filth.**

**At the end of your game versus The Oracle of Filth, if you won, read the next section.**

**If you lost, fight it again. After your second game, read the next section.**

## BATTLE 3 CONCLUSION

*"We did this, didn't we." Nook stares past Indira's eyes, into the empty distance. "We did all of it."*

What's left of Dai and the Hunger lies on the ground; all lumps and arms and empty, staring eyes. As they watch, the two of them sink further together, healing into a new and grotesque form. Lash looks sick at the sight of it.

"That's the Prince of Gluttons. That's what it looks like."

"Are you saying we didn't kill it?" Wolf swings her hammer back over her head.

"No!" Dr. Soleil rushes forward, coming between Wolf and her attempt at a killing blow. "You can't. I still need it."

"Look at what you're doing!" Wolf rages. "You're responsible for what happened here."

"A mistake," Dr. Soleil says quickly, shaking his head. "It's never happened before. It was because of that… because of that orb. It drove the creature into a frenzy."

Everyone turns now to look at Nook, still holding his dark, pulsing orb. There's barely anything left in it now, just a twisting blue flame he can feel faintly warm against the tips of his fingers.

"We can't leave it alive." Nook shakes his head, too fast, he feels dizzy. "The Prince of Gluttons threatens our whole mission. We need it gone."

"You can't be serious." Stake is pale faced, staring at Nook. "That's Dai! We have to take it back to Cindercrown and fix him. He's part of my squad, he's my responsibility."

"There's no fixing this," Dezmodia murmurs, quietly, from where she's crouched beside the body.

"Nobody is taking my monster anywhere," Dr. Soleil insists, straightening up to his full height. "It is property of the University. I am sorry about your friend, but once people become Nameless they don't come back. It's awful, but it is no special grief. Everybody becomes a Nameless eventually. That's the whole point of my research, to stop things like this from happening! And I need this creature to accomplish that. Unless…"

The doctor takes a step towards Nook, eyes sharp with greed. "I'd trade it for that orb of yours. It looks exactly like what I've

been attempting to achieve."

"No." Nook pulls the orb back into his chest. "We need it. I need it."

"Then just stay for a while. Let me study it. In fact, having you here could be invaluable, you could help me learn how you created it. It truly is a fascinating invention."

Indira steps in front of Nook, coming between him and the doctor. "Nothing good comes from it. That experiment ruined Nook's life."

"I'll perfect it!" Dr. Soleil reaches out and Indira stiffens, her hands coming up defensively. "I'll do better!"

*"Brace yourself," Indira warns as her hands begin to glow golden-hot. Nearly scalding his fingertips where they meet along the edges of the mystic orb. Nook can watch the magic beginning to flow inside her eyes, as brilliant blue as the fire within his orb. They both step forward, pinning the burning orb between their chests. Nook bites his tongue against the pain and tries to be empty—a black hole, waiting to be filled.*

"The orb!" Dezmodia snaps, urgently, and Nook comes back to reality to see in all his timelines the orb is starting to fizzle and glow in his hands, bright and blue and burning. But it's grown dimmer, the fire struggling to fill the glass orb, twisting through the black and roiling Void essence threatening to consume it entirely.

"I think this is our last jump," he says, panic starting to fill his voice as the orb grows so hot he can barely stand to hold it any longer. "We have to get to Gravehold."

"Keep that lunatic away from us," Indira calls glaring at the doctor. "Who knows what he would do if he got ahold of this thing."

"I've got him!" Lash cries, springing forward to push the doctor back with the haft of his spear.

"Something's got my leg!"

"Where are you?"

"You're all making a terrible mistake," Dr. Soleil calls after them. "I'm trying to save the world!"

And then everything goes black.

**Open deck 3b and add all of the cards in that deck to your Barracks.**

**Read the next section when you are ready to start the next battle.**

## INTRO TO BATTLE 4

*"Not just change the world." Nook squeezes his eyes shut and thinks of home. "We're going to save it."*

The orb in Nook's hands is cold and dead. He strains his eyes to see the last slivers of flickering blue drown beneath the empty, black clouds. The last remnants of his essence, gone forever. Now he'll never be what he once was. But it's not too late for Gravehold.

"That thing came with us through the portal," Dezmodia says, stepping up beside Nook.

"He's not a *thing*," Stake is crouched on the ground, one of the Glutton's tentacles wrapped around his ankle. He's touching its skin gently, smoothing his thumb over the bumps of its closed eyes. "This is…this is…"

Stake looks over his shoulder towards Nook, his eyes glassy and unfocused. "Who is this?"

"I'd get away from that if I were you," calls a new voice from the shadows. She's backlit for a moment by the swirl of a Void portal closing behind her, and Nook can catch a glimpse of glinting claws and glittering scales. She's younger than he'd ever known her, and yet unmistakable.

"Qu?"

Qu raises an eyebrow. "You know my name? Guess I'm not the only one with an interesting story around here."

With one, deft motion, Qu severs the tentacle around Stake's ankle and pulls him to his feet, dragging him back towards the relative safety of the group.

"What's going on?" Stake asks, staring blankly at his friends.

"That thing eats memories," Qu shudders. "My dad's told me stories."

Wolf catches Stake by the arm, tugging him in close to her side. She stares at the heaped form of friend-turned-monster, her stony expression betraying nothing. "We'll be more careful next time."

"How did you even get here?" Indira asks, eyeing Qu up and down with a suspicious gaze. "You're not even born yet."

"I'm not?" Qu looks past the group to the great walls rising up behind them. Distant torchlight illuminates the sheer face of the magnificent city walls. Qu's mouth drops open in shock. "That can't be…Gravehold?"

"You didn't intend to come here?"

"I…" Qu's words are sparse and distracted. She can't tear her eyes away from the impossible underground city rising up before her. "I was just wandering around. There's…some kind of anomaly in the Void. I don't know what it is or how it works, it's just, like, this blue storm tearing at the fabric of reality. Is that how you all got here too?"

*With a crack, the orb splits open and the Void howls out. Blue fire blasts through Nook, swirling with an impossible force as the world contorts around it.*

Nook pulls his dead orb into his chest.

*"We did this, didn't we." Nook stares past Indira's eyes, into the empty distance. "We did all of it."*

"I fear we might be the anomaly," he murmurs.

"What?" Qu shakes her head in confusion. "Then what are you doing here? You have to stop!"

*"I'm glad you came home," Lash whispers. "Back to us, where you belong. With your family."*

"Lash?" Nook swings his gaze around the group in a sudden panic. "Where's Lash?"

"He stepped forward to stop that doctor from coming with us on our last jump." Dezmodia's eyes are dark. She'd already realized. "I don't think he made it back."

"What does that mean?" Indira asks. "Is he trapped in the past forever?"

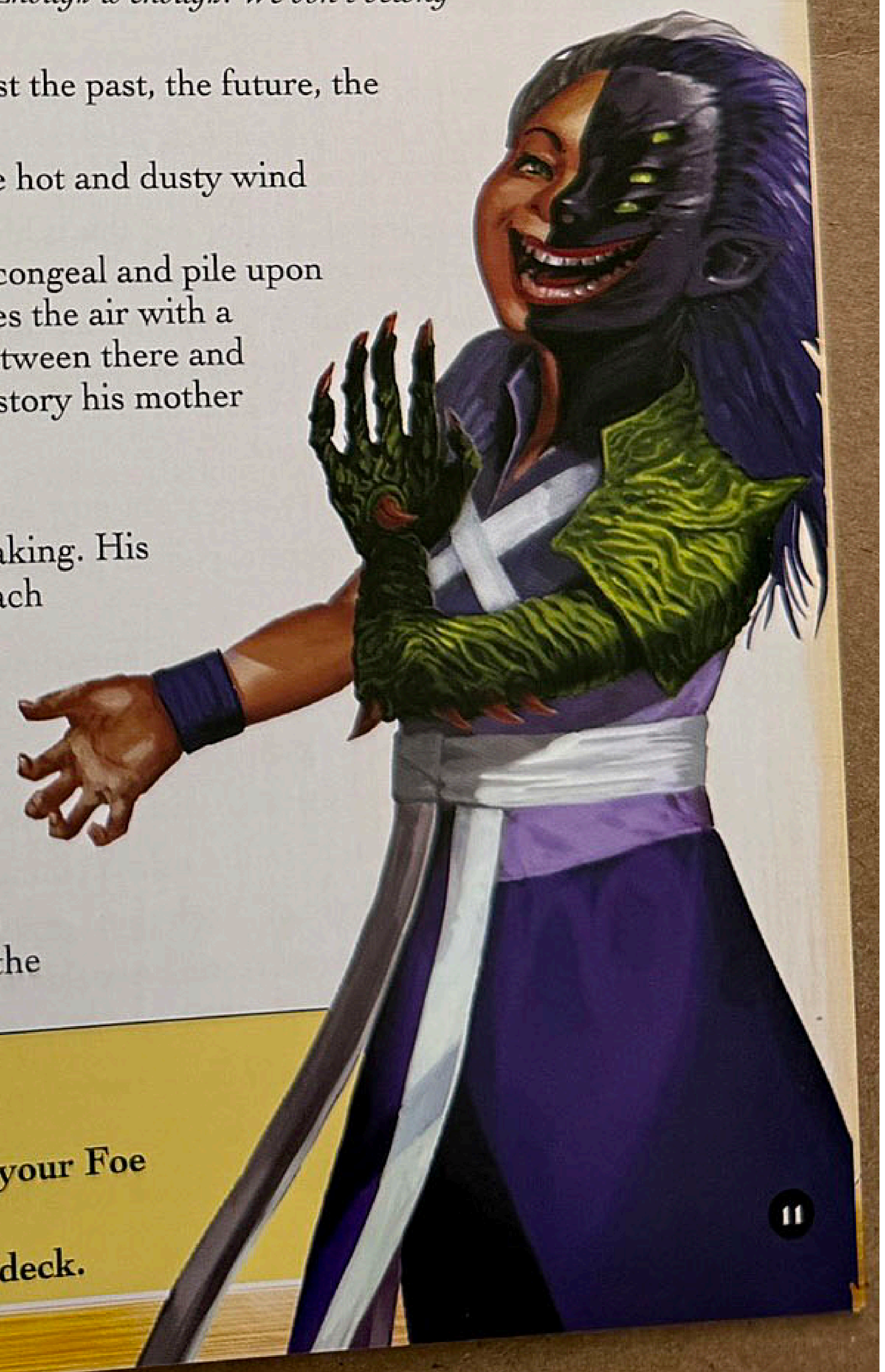
"We don't have time for this." Nook squeezes his eyes shut and shakes his head. "Gravehold needs our help now."

"Nook, you can't be serious." Indira grabs Nook's shoulder. "This has all gone too far."

Nook shakes Indira's hand away, pressing on through the dark towards Gravehold and his impossible goal. He fights for each step as if he's forcing his legs through a thick miasma, the fog growing denser and darker between him and the distant lights of the city.

"Please," he begs—to the darkness, to the fog, to his companions struggling to follow behind him. How can he be so close and still so far? He just needs to get home. He needs to get home.

*"Nook, please," Indira comes up beside him, desperately gripping his arm. "Enough is enough. We don't belong here. We need to go home."*



"Gravehold is my home," Nook insists, closing his eyes tight against the past, the future, the memory, the echoes in his head that will never let him rest.

"This fog isn't natural," Wolf calls, holding her arm up to block the hot and dusty wind sweeping over them. "Something is here, between us and the city."

As if it heard her, the fog begins to separate itself out. The clouds congeal and pile upon each other, forming into a single, gigantic, shadowy creature. It pierces the air with a terrible screech of pain as its body flickers in and out of existence. Between there and nowhere. Nook wasn't alive to see this attack, but he remembers the story his mother used to tell him.

*"It was trapped in a place neither here nor there."*

"Wayward One. That's the Wayward One!" Nook's hands are shaking. His mother had cradled him through this attack, relied on her fellow breach mages to defend the city while she nursed her infant son. She's alive in there. She must be alive in there right now. "I've heard it slipped back and forth into existence and out, this must be where it went. The breach mages must be fighting it from the other side. We can help them. We can protect the city!"

For a moment, Nook swears he can see the outline of a familiar breach mage, not quite here, not quite there, fighting at their side. Is this happening now? Or has it already happened? Phantoms haunt the edges of his vision.

**Battle 4**

**Open envelope 4.**

**Set up Qu, the Rift Walker as your Friend and The Hunger as your Foe according to the Friends and Foes rulebook.**

**Open deck 4a. Use the cards in this deck to set up the nemesis deck.**

**There are four upgraded basic cards in this deck that you will use when setting up every nemesis for the rest of the expedition.**

**Fight Wayward Reflection.**

**At the end of your game versus Wayward Reflection, if you won, read the next section.**

**If you lost, fight it again. After your second game, read the next section.**

## BATTLE 4 CONCLUSION

"We did it." Nook stares, wide-eyed, at the empty space between him and Gravehold. Nothing left to keep him from his goal.

"Nook, please," Indira comes up beside him, desperately gripping his arm. "Enough is enough. We don't belong here. We need to go home."

*"We had a real home once. With everyone, together. It wasn't perfect, but it was ours, and it was taken from us." Nook balls his hands into fists.*

"How could we stop now?" Nook turns to Indira, almost manic with excitement. "Don't you see what we're doing? We're fixing things! We helped them defeat Wayward One, we stopped the Prophet before it even reached the city, we're making a real difference."

"We lost Lash." Indira narrows her eyes. "And what about Dai?"

"Thousands of people died in the Fall, Indi. Do you really think they're not worth two sacrifices?"

Indira steps backwards. "You can't really think that."

*Nook holds Indira's desperate, painful gaze for a moment longer, and then turns to march towards his city once more.*

"Nook." Indira cups his face in her hands, running her thumb down his trembling cheek. "Listen, I'm sorry. I'm sorry we couldn't fix your magic, and I'm sorry you lost your mother. We all lost a lot in the Fall. But that's life! It happened, and we have to accept it and move on. It's in the past."

"It's not in the past!" Nook pulls back, stomping his foot like a child. He can barely breathe around the rage in his throat. "It's now! You don't understand, none of you understand, none of you will ever understand! There is no then."

*Then is now, and now is then. Every second of every day, Gravehold is crumbling, Nook is choking on the dust in his throat, eyes watering as he claws fruitlessly through the piled rubble. His palms are shredded and bloody, his throat too dry to scream for his mother any longer. Every second of every day, his mother does not hear him crying.*

"For you it's time travel, but for me, this is life. I've been living this life for years, Indira. I've been watching the world end over and over again for years."

*"I don't know how to explain it." Nook stops and lifts a hand to his throbbing head. "I didn't come back to the past, not really. This time…it's happening now. And my time is also now. Stake and Wolf's future, that's now too. It's all happening simultaneously. All equally real, all equally both true and in flux. Like a mirror held up to another to create endless reflections—the actions we take here ripple, but everything still exists."*

"Gravehold is still here. It's here right now and I can still save it. I can't just abandon it again."

Nook holds Indira's desperate, painful gaze for a moment longer, and then turns to march towards his city once more.

As he approaches the gate, a spear comes down to block his path. "Hold it. You need to identify yourselves before you can enter the city."

Nook's eyes widen as the guard steps into the firelight. "Lash? You're alive?"

Lash leans away, uncomfortable with the question. "Should I not be?"

"You don't remember us?" Indira asks, coming up from behind.

"Well I know Dez, of course," Lash says, gesturing to her. "Are these more friends from the Void?"

"Is it not obvious?" Qu says, resting her clawed hand on her hip.

"Lash, you don't recognize me?" Nook asks, pulling the guard's attention back to him. "You really don't?"

*Nook blinks at Lash in surprise. "I haven't introduced myself."*

*"You don't have to," Lash chuckles and rests his hand on Nook's shoulder. "You look just like Tressa."*

Lash purses his lips, considering Nook for a long moment. "Oh! You must be related to Tressa. You're the spitting nesis for the rest

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Nook swallows his disappointment and replaces it with a sad smile. "Exactly."

Lash lets the group filter past and they step out into the main square of Gravehold.

"I suppose that answers that question," Dezmodia remarks dryly. "He snapped back to his time, but with no memory of the journey."

"Looks like it won't be long before that happens to us," Wolf adds. "Look at your hands."

Everyone lifts their hands in horror to see that their flesh is beginning to grow pale and translucent. Nook can see the stone floor through the meat of his palms, his human outline growing fuzzy and indistinct.

"We're out of juice." Indira glances at the dead orb in Nook's hand, the chunk of the Prophet's face on his belt the only thing still solid about him. "Out of time."

Four jumps. Four chances and he blew them all. It wasn't enough time. It's never enough time.

"No."

"There's no other option, Nook," Dezmodia says, grimly. "The timestream is rejecting us. We can't stay."

Nook lifts the cold orb up, desperately straining to see the last remnants of blue flame, the tiniest flicker, the last hope that they aren't too late. He can't let it end like this. He can't let it end.

"Nook—"

"I need more TIME!" With a scream of primal fury, Nook hurls the glass orb into the ground.

**Open deck 4b and add all of the cards in that deck to your Barracks.**

**Read the next section when you are ready to start the final battle.**

## INTRO BATTLE 5

With a crack, the orb splits open and the Void howls out. Blue fire blasts through Nook, swirling with an impossible force as the world contorts around it. He feels a terrible sucking sensation, ripping at his magic, at his very essence to feed the growing storm. It is horribly familiar.

*Finally, when I ran out of breaches, the portal began pulling at me, pulling at my very mind.*

"What did you do?" Indira screams over the rush of wind and noise. "Nook!"

There's screaming all around them as the citizens of Gravehold begin to run, the great alarm bells clanging above it all. But all Nook can hear is the frantic pulse of his heart in his ears, fluttering with an arrhythmic intensity perfectly matched to the pulsating blue fire surrounding him. There is no heat, just light so bright it sears, brilliant, blue, filling Nook's eyes, his vision. More and more of it is pouring out of him as he struggles to stand, magic bleeding from his skin.

"Beautiful and terrifying," Stake whispers, gripping Wolf's shoulder as she tries to shield him from the storm. "No one will ever believe me."

As the blue fire spreads, the rest of the orb is climbing into the air, growing darker and faster as it spins. Now it is nothing but Void, a whirling ball of leaking darkness, staining the air. Black streaks of lightning cut through the purple clouds, and beyond them, staring up, Nook can see…

Everything.

*Nook shakes his head. "Today, yesterday, it's all the same. I think I've been ready since the day I died."*

Something is laughing at him.

Nook falls to his knees, barely able to support himself as his very essence is drained away, still staring up into the anomaly he created. It's like staring into a mirror.

*Like a mirror held up to another to create endless reflections*

Then, now, the beginning, the end, everything he has always seen. The timeless impossibility of the Void he'd been holding inside him is unraveling the sky. Can they see it now? Can they see it?

"Nook!"

Through the storm, a hand closes on his arm, gripping tight enough to bruise. He tears his eyes away from the sky to see Indira, silver hair whipping wildly behind her, beautiful eyes narrowed in grim determination. He sees her, legs dangling off his workbench. He sees her dirty and cold, in the caverns below Gravehold, crying where no one can hear her. He sees her gripping Yan Magda's skirt in one, tiny hand, her opal in the other.

*Indira kept me together, afterwards.*

"Nook, please," Indira begs, and he can hear her even over the thunder and the screams and the bells and his heart. "Stay here. Please just stay here."

Nook takes a deep breath. Lets the tension fall from his shoulders. As he relaxes, the blue magic draining from him slows to a trickle, and then, finally, stops. His thundering pulse quiets. In the background, he can hear the frantic footsteps of Gravehold's breach mages, rushing to battle, but all he watches are Indira's eyes. Blue and steady and the same, no matter when he is.

"I'm here, Indira," he promises.

She wraps her arm around his waist, helping him rise to his feet. He feels lightheaded, weak and unstable with so much of his essence drained away. All around him, the blue fire starts to pull together, condensing into a column that rises just as Nook does. Echoing his movements. He stares into the fire, and feels the fire somehow staring back. New, empty, waiting to be given identity.

"I know who you are." With shaking hands, Nook unties from his belt the cracked stone face he took from the body of the Prophet.

"That mask," Indira gasps.

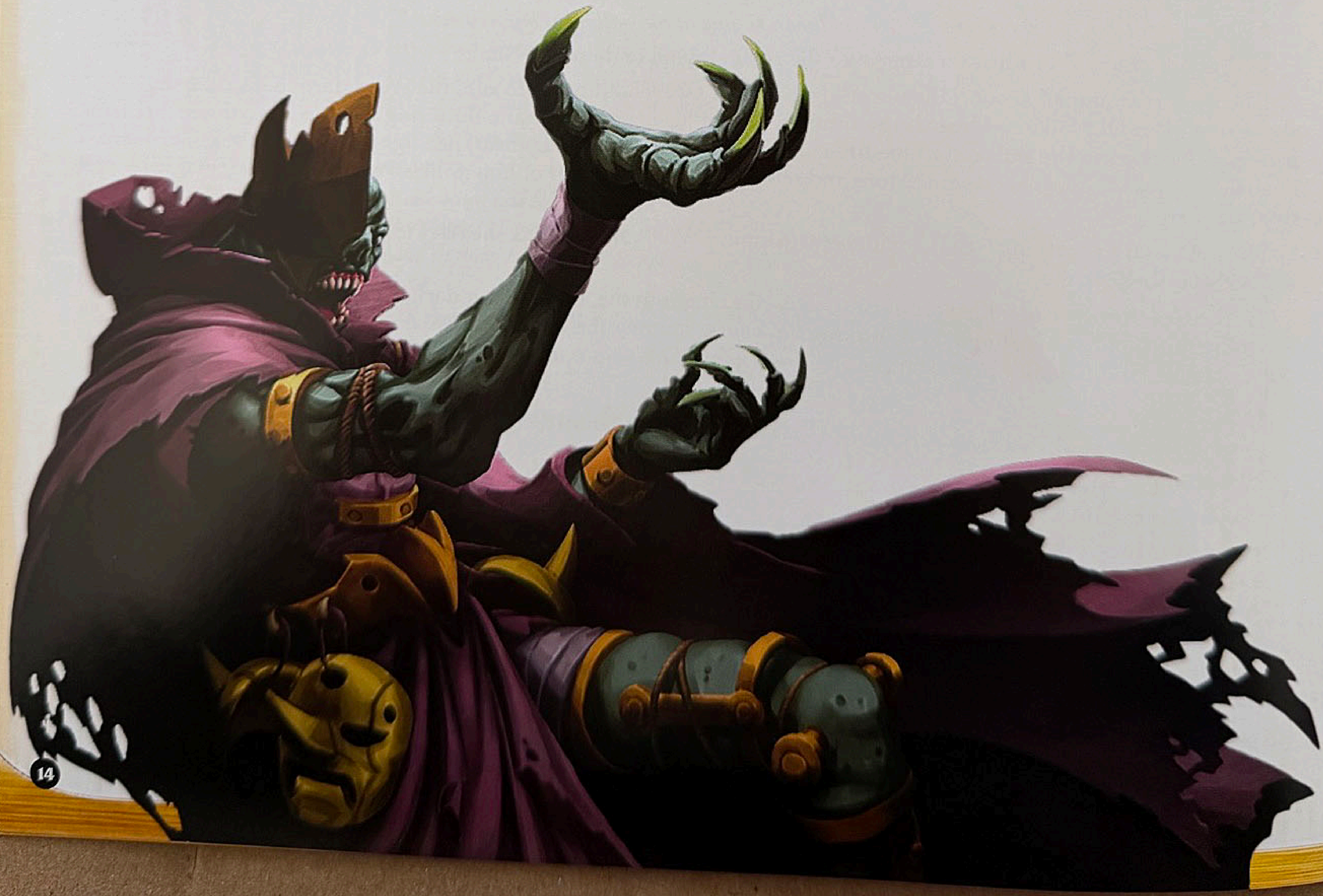
"It's yours," says Nook, and hands the mask to Remnant.

It fits just how they remembered.

"Isn't it funny," Nook says, shaking his head. "I always felt like I was living more than one life at once. I guess I was right."

Above them, inside the swirling Void anomaly, something laughs at Nook's revelation. An old, familiar laugh, from days long ago.

Nook grips Indira's shoulder for balance, summoning every last bit of strength he can muster, as the Crooked Mask steps from the portal.



**Battle 5**

Open envelope 5. Add Remnant to your barracks.

Set up Qu, the Rift Walker as your Friend and The Anomaly as your Foe according to the Friends and Foes rulebook.

Open deck 5. Use the cards in this deck to set up the nemesis deck.

Fight Crooked Mask with these Battle 5 rules:

Crooked Mask starts the game with 10 additional life.

Replace a nemesis turn order card with the Unleash turn order card.

Use the Increased Difficulty rules.

At the end of your game versus Crooked Mask, if you won, read the next section.

If you lost, fight it again. After your second game, read the next section.

**With the addition of tier-four treasures, you might find the amount of overhead on this fight difficult to manage. Feel free to play without the Friends and Foes module if you would like a more streamlined experience.**

## FIGHT 5 CONCLUSION

*Nook wakes up, as he always does, on the small cot in the back of his laboratory. Indira's been begging him to settle in properly now that they're in Northpost, to make himself a real home.*

Nook falls to the ground as his legs give out from beneath him. What little magic still remained in him was exhausted in the battle, and now he can feel the hollow in his stomach. A body without life. Indira rushes to his side as she always has, their whole lives, always the same. The one constant he has always relied upon.

"You're okay," she whispers, smoothing her cold hands across his forehead. Her voice sounds young in his ears, like the teenager who pulled him from the rubble. "You're okay."

"We did this, didn't we." Nook stares past Indira's eyes, into the empty distance. "We did all of it."

He lifts a hand to the city all around him. Gravehold, still standing as the dust of battle settles.

"What are you talking about?"

"I see Jian," Nook whispers, curling into Indira's lap. "Cradling the orb I brought here. I see Yan Magda, walking with Garu through the Void portal I wrought. I see Xaxos, still so young, head filled with Crooked Mask's whispers, dreaming over his mother's books."

"We stopped Crooked Mask." Indira takes Nook's hand and squeezes it tight. "We won."

"No." Nook shakes his head. "Don't you get it? We didn't stop anything, we started it all. We killed the Prophet that will reincarnate a third time and reach the city. We made the Prince of Gluttons. I have always been Remnant."

"Hush now, hush," Indira whispers into his hair as she rocks him gently. "It's all going to be okay."

"We could never change things." Nook's breath comes in ragged. He feels so empty. "I was right. Then is now and now is then. It's all the same. We've always been here, we were always a part of this. We are the consequence of our own actions, forever and ever and ever."

"So then, you can't save Gravehold after all." Indira had never wanted this journey in the first place, but Nook can still see her heart breaking in her eyes. "That means you'll never have your home."

Nook gathers what little strength remains in him to catch Indira's hand in his. He kisses her fingertips one by one, savoring both the memory and the present. "I already had a home."

Remnant drifts nearby, its form featureless, but its marble mask tilted down to stare at Nook. The two echoes watch each other with silent understanding.

"We're starting to fade," Wolf says, walking over to where Nook and Indira rest on the ground. Her hand is translucent where it's holding on to Stake's. Dezmodia and Qu trail behind her. "We're returning to our own timeline."

"I don't think I'm going to make it back," Nook says, closing his eyes as Indira begins to disappear beneath him. "I fear I'm out of time."

"No," Indira starts to argue, but Nook cuts her off with a single, quiet look.

"It's okay, Indi. I'm always around. I'm alive somewhere." Nook glances up at Remnant's stone face. "The future and the present and the past, if they're all the same, then I'm always somewhere. Always back in Northpost with you, always in New Gravehold with you, always in the tunnels, holding your hand."

Indira tries to grab for Nook's hand, but she slips right through. Both of them barely exist anymore.

"I'll find you," she promises. "I'll find you everywhere and I'll protect you."

Nook smiles, so faintly, his face all but gone.

"It's okay, Indira. You did everything you could."

"Huh?" Indira is looking at him oddly from where she sits, cross-legged on the surface of his workbench. He's told her a thousand times not to sit there, it could contaminate his experiments. Or has he told her at all?

"Where are you right now?" Indira asks, rolling her eyes, and Nook is burying his face in the side of her neck. He is kissing the tips of her fingers. He is bleeding from a gash above his eye, and the blood is soaking into her torn shirt where he's held against her chest.

"The end." Nook lifts his orb, glowing brilliant and blue, to his eyeline, and twists it experimentally. "And the beginning."

**Open the END deck. Add them to your collection.**

## Congratulations! You have completed this expedition.

Missing any components? Email contact@indieboardsandcards.com.
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